

PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau



INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : E21B 19/16		A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/11310 (43) International Publication Date: 2 March 2000 (02.03.00)
<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB99/02708 (22) International Filing Date: 16 August 1999 (16.08.99) (30) Priority Data: 9818360.1 24 August 1998 (24.08.98) GB</p> <p>(71) Applicant (<i>for all designated States except US</i>): WEATHERFORD/LAMB, INC. [US/US]; c/o CSC - The United States Corporation Company, 1013 Centre Road, Wilmington, DE 19805 (US). (71) Applicant (<i>for GB only</i>): HARDING, Richard, Patrick [GB/GB]; Marks & Clerk, 4220 Nash Court, Oxford Business Park South, Oxford OX4 2RU (GB). (72) Inventor; and (75) Inventor/Applicant (<i>for US only</i>): PIETRAS, Bernd-Goerg [DE/DE]; Sandriedeweg 12, D-30900 Wedemark (DE). (74) Agent: LIND, Robert; Marks & Clerk, 4220 Nash Court, Oxford Business Park South, Oxford OX4 2RU (GB).</p>			<p>(81) Designated States: AU, CA, GB, NO, US, European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE).</p> <p>Published <i>With international search report.</i></p>
<p>(54) Title: AN APPARATUS FOR CONNECTING TUBULARS USING A TOP DRIVE</p> <p>(57) Abstract</p> <p>An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said apparatus comprising a motor (4, 4') for rotating a tool (30) for drivingly engaging a tubular, and means (3) for connecting said motor (4, 4') to said top drive, the apparatus being such that, in use, said motor (4, 4') can rotate one tubular with respect to another to connect said tubular.</p>			

FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Larvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece	ML	Mali	TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	MN	Mongolia	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MR	Mauritania	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MW	Malawi	UC	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MX	Mexico	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	NE	Niger	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NL	Netherlands	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NO	Norway	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NZ	New Zealand	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	PL	Poland		
CM	Cameroon	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CN	China	KZ	Kazakhstan	RO	Romania		
CU	Cuba	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
CZ	Czech Republic	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DE	Germany	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
DK	Denmark	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		

AN APPARATUS FOR CONNECTING TUBULARS USING A TOP DRIVE

This invention relates to an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive and is more particularly, but not exclusively, intended for facilitating the
5 connection of a section or stand of casing to a string of casing.

In the construction of oil or gas wells it is usually necessary to line the borehole with a string of tubulars known as a casing. Because of the length of the casing required, sections or stands of say two sections of casing are progressively added to the string as it is lowered into the well from a drilling platform. In particular, when it is
10 desired to add a section or stand of casing the string is usually restrained from falling into the well by applying the slips of a spider located in the floor of the drilling platform. The new section or stand of casing is then moved from a rack to the well centre above the spider. The threaded pin of the section or stand of casing to be connected is then located over the threaded box of the casing in the well and the
15 connection is made up by rotation there between. An elevator is then connected to the top of the new section or stand and the whole casing string lifted slightly to enable the slips of the spider to be released. The whole casing string is then lowered until the top of the section is adjacent the spider whereupon the slips of the spider are re-applied, the elevator disconnected and the process repeated.

20 It is common practice to use a power tong to torque the connection up to a predetermined torque in order to make the connection. The power tong is located on a platform, either on rails, or hung from a derrick on a chain. However, it has recently been proposed to use a top drive for making such connection. The normal use of such a top drive may be the driving of a drill string.

A problem associated with using a top drive for rotating tubulars in order to obtain a connection between tubulars is that some top drives are not specifically designed for rotating tubulars are not able to rotate at the correct speed or have non standard rotors.

5 According to the present invention there is provided an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said apparatus comprising a motor for rotating a tool for drivingly engaging a tubular, and means for connecting said motor to said top drive, the apparatus being such that, in use, said motor can rotate one tubular with respect to another to connect said tubulars.

10 Other features of the invention are set out in Claims 2 et seq.

For a better understanding of the present invention and in order to show how the same may be carried into effect reference will now be made, by way of example, to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a front perspective view of an apparatus in accordance with the
15 present invention; and

Figure 2 is a rear perspective view of the apparatus of Figure 1 in use.

Referring to Figure 1 there is shown an apparatus which is generally identified by reference numeral 1.

The apparatus 1 comprises a connecting tubular 2, a suspension unit 3 and a
20 hydraulic motor 4 and 4'. The hydraulic motor 4,4' has a stator 5 and a rotor 6 and is driven by a supply of pressurised hydraulic fluid (the fluid supply lines are not illustrated in the Figures). The suspension unit 3 suspends the hydraulic motor 4,4' from the connecting tubular 2.

The suspension unit 3 comprises a plate 7 which is fixed to the connecting tubular 2 by a collar 8. The plate 7 has two projections 9 and 10 which have holes 11 and 12 for accommodating axles 13 and 14, which are rotationally disposed therein. The axles 13 and 14 are integral with a rigid body 15. A slider 16 is arranged on 5 runners 17 and (not shown) on the rigid body 15. Arms 18 and 19 are connected at one end to the slider 16 via spherical bearings 20 and at the other end to each side of the stator 5 via spherical bearings 21 and 21'. The arms 18 and 19 are provided with lugs 22 and 22' to which one end of a piston and cylinder 23, 24 is attached and are movable thereabout. The other end of each piston and cylinder 23, 24 is attached to lugs 25, 26 10 respectively and is movable thereabout. A mud pipe 27 is provided between the plate 7 and the stator 5 for carrying mud to the inside of a tubular therebelow. The mud pipe 27 comprises curved outer surfaces at both ends (not shown) which are located in corresponding recesses in cylindrical sections 28, 29, thus allowing a ball and socket type movement between the plate 7 and the stator 5.

15 Referring to Figure 2, the apparatus 1 is suspended from a top drive (not shown) via connecting shaft 2. A tool 30 for engaging with a tubular is suspended from beneath the rotor 6 of the hydraulic motor 4. Such a tool may be arranged to be inserted into the upper end of the tubular, with gripping elements of the tool being radially displaceable for engagement with the inner wall of the tubular so as to secure the tubular to the tool.

20 In use, a tubular (not shown) to be connected to a tubular string held in a spider (not shown) is located over the tool 30. The tool 30 grips the tubular. The apparatus 1 and the tubular are lowered by moving the top drive so that the tubular is in close proximity with the tubular string held in the spider. However, due to amongst other things manufacturing tolerances in the tubulars, the tubular often does not align

perfectly with the tubular held in the spider. The suspension unit 3 allows minor vertical and horizontal movements to be made by using alignment pistons 31 and 32 for horizontal movements, and piston and cylinders 23 and 24 for vertical movements. The alignment piston 31 acts between the rigid body 15 and the plate 7. The alignment piston 32 acts between the slider 16 and the arm 19. The alignment pistons 31 and 32 and pistons and cylinders 23, 25 are actuated by hydraulic or pneumatic means and controlled from a remote control device.

The piston and cylinders 23, 24 are hydraulically operable. It is envisaged however, that the piston and cylinders 23, 24 may be of the pneumatic compensating type, i.e. their internal pressure may be adjusted to compensate for the weight of the tubular so that movement of the tubular may be conducted with minimal force. This can conveniently be achieved by introducing pneumatic fluid into the piston and cylinder 23, 24 and adjusting the pressure therein.

Once the tubulars are aligned, the hydraulic motor 4 and 4' rotate the tubular via gearing in the stator 5 thereby making up the severed connection. During connection the compensating piston and cylinders 23, 24 expand to accommodate the movement of the upper tubular. The alignment pistons 31 and 32 can then be used to move the top of the tubular into alignment with the top drive. If necessary, final torquing can be conducted by the top drive at this stage, via rotation of the pipe 27, and the main elevator can also be swung onto and connected to the tubular prior to releasing the slips in the spider and lowering the casing string. It will be appreciated that the suspension unit 3 effectively provides an adapter for connecting a top drive to the tubular engaging tool 30.

CLAIMS

1. Apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, the apparatus comprising a motor (4, 4') for rotating a tool (30) for drivingly engaging a tubular, and means (3) for connecting said motor (4, 4') to said top drive, the apparatus being such that, in use, said motor (4, 4') can rotate one tubular with respect to another to connect said tubulars.
2. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said motor is hydraulically operable.
3. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1 or 2, wherein said means comprises a suspension unit (3) which, in use, can move said motor relative to the axis of said top drive to facilitate aligning said tubulars.
4. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 3, wherein said suspension unit (3) is provided with at least one piston and cylinder (23, 24) in order to raise and lower said motor (4, 4').
5. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 4, wherein said at least one piston and cylinder can be pneumatically actuated to compensate for the weight of said tubular.
6. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 3, 4 or 5, wherein said suspension unit (3) comprises spherical bearings (20, 21) to allow movement of said motor in two planes.

7. An apparatus as claimed in any of claims 3 to 6, wherein said suspension unit (3) comprises adjustable pistons and cylinders (31, 32) to position said motor (4, 4').

5 8. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, comprising a mud pipe (27) for delivering mud to said tubular.

9. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein said mud pipe (27) is provided with a ball joint (28, 29) at both ends thereof.

10

10. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, when supported by a top drive.

11. A method of connecting first and second tubulars for use in lining a borehole, the method comprising:

15 coupling said first tubular to a top drive using a suspension unit, wherein the tubular engages the rotor of a motor supported by the suspension unit; engaging a lower end of said first tubular with an upper end of said second tubular;

rotating said first tubular using the motor so as to screw the tubulars together;

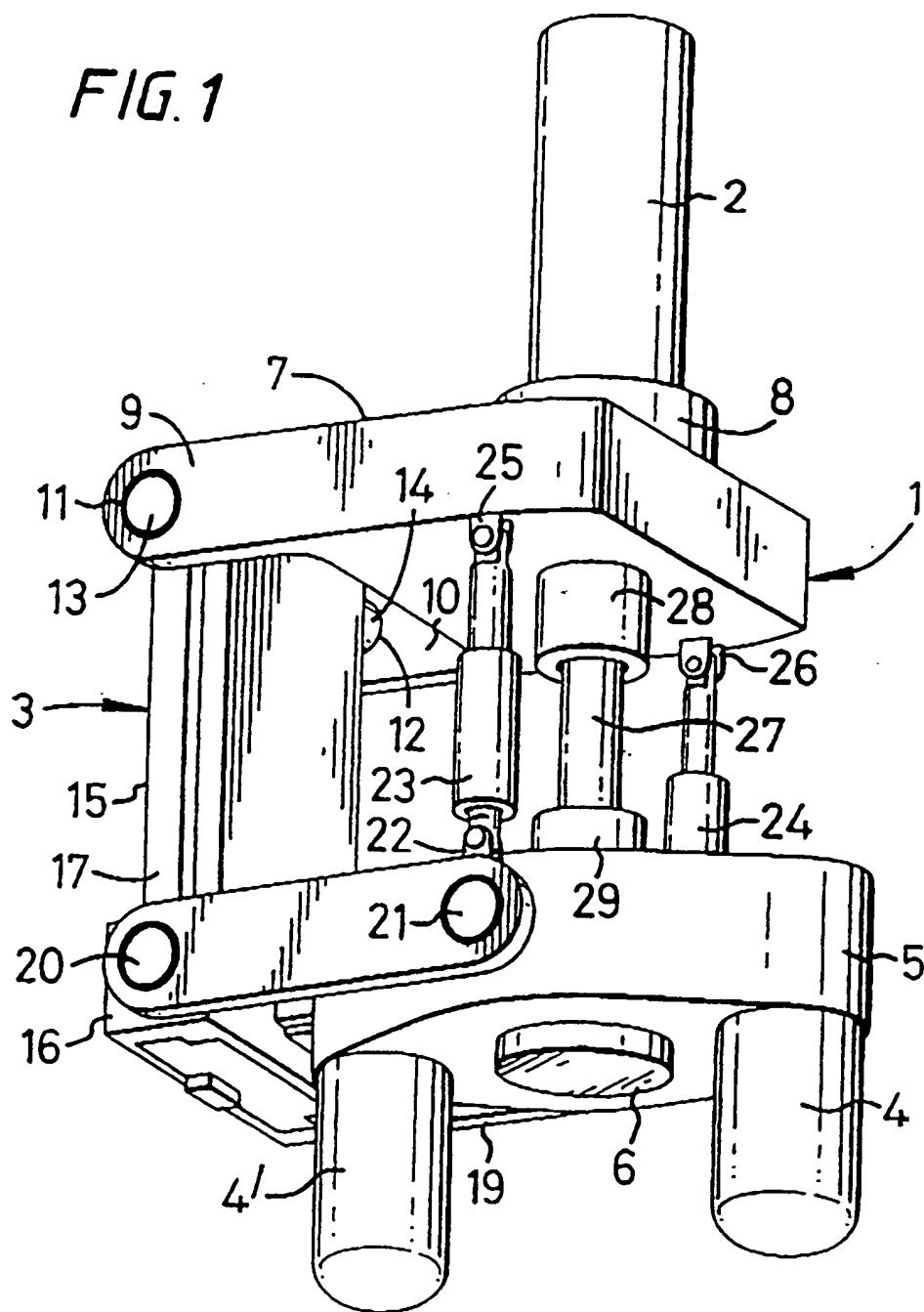
20 and

tightening the connection between the tubulars by rotating the first tubular using the top drive.

12. A method according to claim 11, the method comprising adjusting the suspension unit prior to tightening the connection using the top drive so as to bring the first tubular into alignment with the top drive.

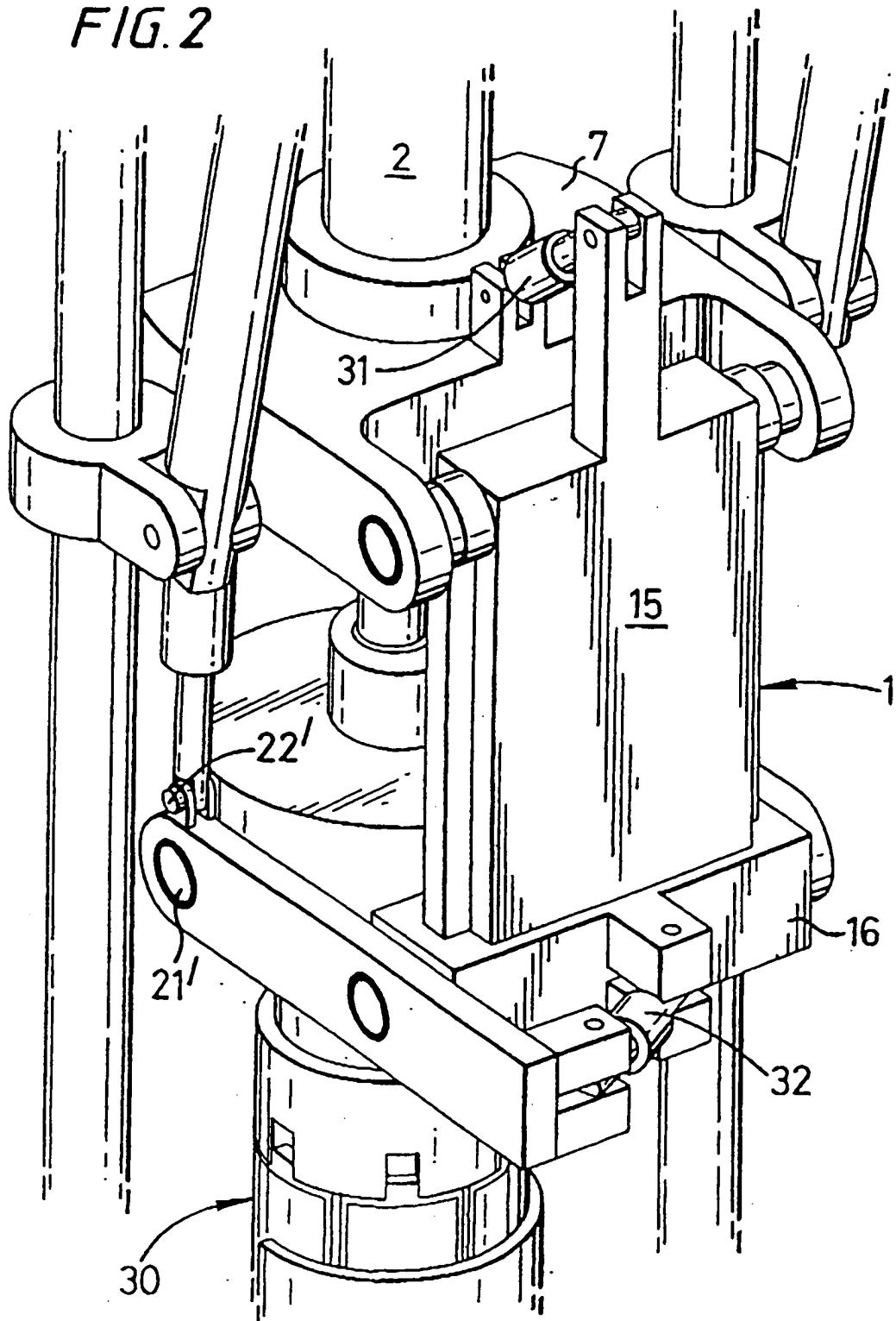
1/2

FIG. 1



2/2

FIG.2



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

17/GB 99/02708

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 E21B19/16

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 E21B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 4 625 796 A (BOYADJIEFF GEORGE I) 2 December 1986 (1986-12-02) column 3, line 19-52 column 6, line 1-21 figures 1,2 ---	1,2,8
X	US 4 449 596 A (BOYADJIEFF GEORGE I) 22 May 1984 (1984-05-22) column 11, line 33-59 ---	1,8
X	US 3 766 991 A (BROWN C) 23 October 1973 (1973-10-23) abstract column 5, line 13-42 figure 1B ---	1
	-/-	

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. Patent family members are listed in annex.

' Special categories of cited documents :

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"Z" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

Date of mailing of the international search report

19 November 1999

26/11/1999

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.O. Box 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Schouten, A

1

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

i/GB 99/02708

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 4 813 493 A (SHAW DANIAL G ET AL) 21 March 1989 (1989-03-21) abstract; figure 1 ---	1,11
A	US 5 388 651 A (BERRY JOE R) 14 February 1995 (1995-02-14) column 7-8 figures 1,2 -----	1,11

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

I :/GB 99/02708

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)			Publication date
US 4625796	A 02-12-1986	CA	1250569 A		28-02-1989
		EP	0202184 A		20-11-1986
		JP	1752104 C		08-04-1993
		JP	4034672 B		08-06-1992
		JP	61233194 A		17-10-1986
		NO	177018 B		27-03-1995
US 4449596	A 22-05-1984	CA	1194855 A		08-10-1985
		DE	3327739 A		16-02-1984
		DE	3347970 C		06-11-1986
		DE	3347971 C		30-10-1986
		DE	3347972 C		30-10-1986
		FR	2531479 A		10-02-1984
		FR	2565287 A		06-12-1985
		FR	2565288 A		06-12-1985
		FR	2565289 A		06-12-1985
		GB	2124680 A,B		22-02-1984
		GB	2152106 A,B		31-07-1985
		GB	2152107 A,B		31-07-1985
		GB	2152108 A,B		31-07-1985
		JP	1436263 C		25-04-1988
		JP	59044487 A		12-03-1984
		JP	62045392 B		26-09-1987
		NO	832774 A		06-02-1984
		NO	854202 A		06-02-1984
		NO	854343 A		06-02-1984
		NO	854358 A		06-02-1984
US 3766991	A 23-10-1973	NONE			
US 4813493	A 21-03-1989	WO	8808069 A		20-10-1988
		NO	885529 A		13-12-1988
US 5388651	A 14-02-1995	NONE			

PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau



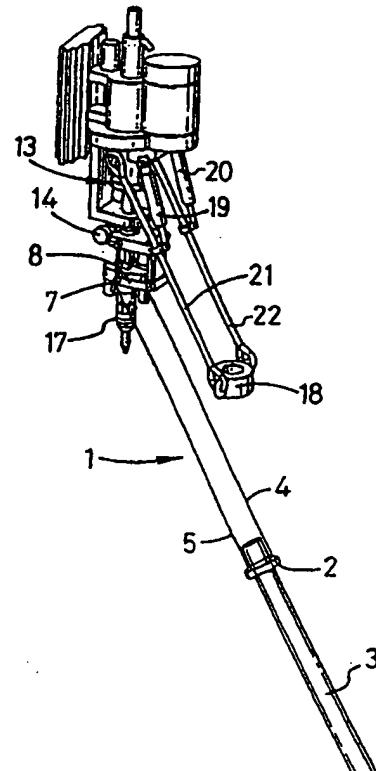
INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : E21B 19/16, 19/06	A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/11309 (43) International Publication Date: 2 March 2000 (02.03.00)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB99/02704		(81) Designated States: AU, CA, GB, NO, US, European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE).
(22) International Filing Date: 16 August 1999 (16.08.99)		
(30) Priority Data: 9818366.8 24 August 1998 (24.08.98) GB		Published With international search report.
(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): WEATHERFORD/LAMB, INC. [US/US]; CSC - The United States Corporation Company, 1013 Centre Road, Wilmington, DE 19805 (US).		
(71) Applicant (for GB only): HARDING, Richard, Patrick [GB/GB]; Marks & Clerk, 4220 Nash Court, Oxford Business Park South, Oxford OX4 2RU (GB).		
(72) Inventor; and		
(75) Inventor/Applicant (for US only): PIETRAS, Bernd-Georg [DE/DE]; Sandriedeweg 12, D-30900 Wedemark (DE).		
(74) Agent: LIND, Robert; Marks & Clerk, 4220 Nash Court, Oxford Business Park South, Oxford OX4 2RU (GB).		

(54) Title: METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONNECTING TUBULARS USING A TOP DRIVE

(57) Abstract

An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars, said apparatus comprising a winch (15), at least one wire line (4, 5) and a device (2) for gripping a tubular (3), the arrangement being such that, in use, the winch (15) can be used to winch said at least one wire (4, 5) and said device (2) to position a tubular (3) below said top drive.



FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Latvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece	ML	Mali	TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	MN	Mongolia	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MR	Mauritania	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MW	Malawi	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MX	Mexico	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	NE	Niger	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NL	Netherlands	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NO	Norway	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NZ	New Zealand	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	PL	Poland		
CM	Cameroon	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CN	China	KZ	Kazakhstan	RO	Romania		
CU	Cuba	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
CZ	Czech Republic	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DE	Germany	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
DK	Denmark	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		
EE	Estonia						

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CONNECTING TUBULARS USING A TOP DRIVE

This invention relates to a method and apparatus for facilitating the connection of
5 tubulars using a top drive and is, more particularly but not exclusively, for facilitating
the connection of a section or stand of casing to a string or casing.

In the construction of wells such as oil or gas wells, it is usually necessary to
line predrilled holes with a string of tubulars known as casing. Because of the size of
the casing required, sections or stands of say two sections of casing are connected to
10 each other as they are lowered into the well from a platform. The first section or stand
of casing is lowered into the well and is usually restrained from falling into the well by
a spider located in the platform's floor. Subsequent sections or stands of casing are
moved from a rack to the well centre above the spider. The threaded pin of the section
or stand of casing to be connected is located over the threaded box of the casing in the
15 well to form a string of casing. The connection is made-up by rotation therebetween.

It is common practice to use a power tong to torque the connection up to a
predetermined torque in order to perfect the connection. The power tong is located on
the platform, either on rails, or hung from a derrick on a chain. However, it has recently
been proposed to use a top drive for making such connection.

20 Prior to the present invention, pipe handling devices moved pipes to be
connected to a tubular string from a rack to the well centre using articulated arms or,
more commonly, a pipe elevator suspended from the drilling tower.

The present invention provides an alternative to these devices.

Accordingly, a first aspect of the present invention provides an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars, said apparatus comprising a winch, at least one wire line and a device for gripping a tubular the arrangement being such that, in use, the winch can be used to winch said at least one wire and said device to position a tubular 5 below said top drive.

Further features are set out in Claims 2 to 6.

According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive and comprising the steps of attaching at least one wire to a tubular, the wire depending from the top drive or from a 10 component attached thereto, and winching the wire and the tubular upwards to a position beneath the top drive.

According to a third aspect of the present invention there is provided an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said apparatus comprising an elevator and a pair of bails, characterised in that said elevator is, in use, 15 movable in relation to said pair of bails.

According to a fourth aspect of the present invention there is provided an apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said apparatus comprising an elevator (102) and a pair of bails (103, 104), characterised in that said elevator (102) is, in use, movable relative to said pair of bails (103, 104).

20 For a better understanding of the present invention and in order to show how the same may be carried into effect reference will now be made, by way of example, to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figures 1a to 1e are perspective views of an apparatus in accordance with a first embodiment of the present invention at various stages of operation; and

Figures 2a to 2d are perspective views of an apparatus in accordance with a second embodiment of the invention at various stages of operation.

Referring to Figures 1a to 1e there is shown an apparatus which is generally identified by reference numeral 1.

5 The apparatus 1 comprises a clamp 2 for retaining a tubular 3. The clamp 2 is suspended on wires 4, 5 which are connected thereto on opposing sides thereof. The wire 5 passes through an eye 6 in lug 7 which is attached to a spherical bearing in arm 8 of a suspension unit 9 at the point at which the arm 8 is connected to a hydraulic motor 10. The wire is connected to the hydraulic motor 10 in a corresponding manner. The
10 suspension unit 9 is of a type which enables displacement of the tubular 3 when connected to a tool 17 (see below), relative to a top drive 13, along a number of different axes. The wires 4, 5 pass across the suspension unit 9 and over pulley wheels 11 which are rotatably arranged on a plate 12. The plate 12 is fixed in relation to a top drive generally identified by reference numeral 13. The wires 4, 5 then pass over drums 15 14 to which the wires 4, 5 are also connected. The drums 14 are rotatable via a hydraulic winch motor 15.

In use, the clamp 2 is placed around a tubular below a box 16 thereof. The hydraulic winch motor 15 is then activated, which lifts the tubular 3 (conveniently from a rack) and towards a tool 17 for gripping the tubular 3 (Fig. 1b). The tubular 3
20 encompasses the tool 17 at which point the hydraulic winch motor 15 is deactivated (Fig. 1c). During this operation the elevator 18 is held away from the tool 17 by piston and cylinders 19, 20 acting on bails 21 and 22. The suspension unit 9 allows the hydraulic motor 10 and the arrangement depending therebelow to move in vertical and horizontal planes relative to the top drive 13. The eyes 6 in lugs 7 maintain the wires 4

and 5 in line with the tubular 3 during any such movement. The tool 17 may now be used to connect the tubular to the tubular string. More particularly, the tool may be of a type which is inserted into the upper end of the tubular, with gripping elements of the tool being radially displaceable for engagement with the inner wall of the tubular so as 5 to secure the tubular to the tool. Once the tool is secured to the tubular, the hydraulic motor 10 is activated which rotates the tool 17 and hence the tubular 3 for engagement with a tubular string held in a spider.

The clamp 2 is now released from the tubular 3, and the top drive 13 and hence apparatus 1 is now lifted clear of the tubular 3. The elevator 18 is now swung in line 10 with the apparatus 1 by actuation of the piston and cylinders 19 and 20 (Fig. 1d).

The top drive 13 is then lowered, lowering the elevator 18 over the box 16 of the tubular 3. The slips in the elevator 18 are then set to take the weight of the entire tubular string. The top drive is then raised slightly to enable the slips in the spider to be released and the top drive is then lowered to introduce the tubular string into the 15 borehole.

Referring to Figures 2a to 2d there is shown an apparatus which is generally identified by reference numeral 101.

The apparatus 101 comprises an elevator 102 arranged at one end of bails 103, 104. The bails 103, 104 are movably attached to a top drive 105 via axles 106 which 20 are located in eyes 107 in the other end of the bails 103, 104. Piston and cylinders 108, 109 are arranged between the top drive 105 and the bails. One end of the piston and cylinders 108, 109 are movably arranged on axles 110 on the top drive. The other end of the piston and cylinders 108, 109 are movably arranged on axles 111, 112 which are

located in lugs 113, 114 located approximately one-third along the length of the bails 103, 109.

The elevator 102 is provided with pins 115 on either side thereof and projecting therefrom. The pins 115 are located in slots 116 and 116a. A piston 117, 118 and 5 cylinder 119, 120 are arranged in each of the bails 103, 104. The cylinders are arranged in slot 121, 122. The piston 117, 118 are connected at their ends to the pins 115. The cylinders 119, 120 are prevented from moving along the bails 103, 104 by cross members 123 and 124. A hole is provided in each of the cross members to allow the pistons to move therethrough.

10 In use, a tubular 125 is angled from a rack near to the well centre. The tubular may however remain upright in the rack. The clamp 102 is placed around the tubular below a box 126 (Figure 2a). The top drive is raised on a track on a derrick. The tubular is lifted from the rack and the tubular swings to hang vertically (Figure 2b). The piston and cylinders 108, 109 are actuated, extending the pistons allowing the bails 103, 15 104 to move to a vertical position. The tubular 125 is now directly beneath a tool 127 for internally gripping and rotating the tubular 125 (Figure 2c). The pistons 117, 118 and cylinders 119, 120 are now actuated. The pins 115 follow slot 116 and the clamp 102 moves upwardly, lifting the tubular 125 over the tool 127 (Figure 2d). The tool 127 can now be actuated to grip the tubular 125.

20 At this stage the elevator 102 is released and the top drive 105 lowered to enable the tubular 125 to be connected to the string of tubulars in the slips and torqued appropriately by the top drive 105.

The pistons 117, 118 and cylinders 119, 120 are meantime extended so that after the tubular 125 has been connected the top drive 105 can be raised until the elevator 102

is immediately below the box. The elevator 102 is then actuated to grip the tubular 125 firmly. The top drive 105 is then raised to lift the tubular string sufficiently to enable the wedges in the slips to be withdrawn. The top drive 105 is then lower to the drilling platform, the slips applied, the elevator 102 raised for the tubular 125 and the process
5 repeated.

CLAIMS

1. An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive and comprising a winch (15), at least one wire (4, 5), and a device (2) for gripping a tubular 5 (3), the arrangement being such that, in use, the winch (15) can be used to winch said at least one wire (4, 5) and said device (2) to position a tubular (3) below said top drive.
2. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising a suspension unit (9) for coupling the tubular to the top drive.

10

3. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 2, wherein said suspension unit (9) has a static part fixed with respect to a top drive and a dynamic part movable relative thereto.
4. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 3, wherein said winch (15) is located on said 15 static part of said suspension unit (9).
5. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 4, comprising a guide (7) located on said dynamic part (8) of said suspension unit (9).

20

6. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 5, comprising a pulley wheel (11) on said static part of said suspension unit (9).
7. A method of facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive and comprising the steps of attaching at least one wire to a tubular, the wire depending from

the top drive or from a component attached thereto, and winching the wire and the tubular upwards to a position beneath the top drive.

8. An apparatus for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said
5 apparatus comprising an elevator (102) and a pair of bails (103, 104), characterised in
that said elevator (102) is, in use, movable relative to said pair of bails (103, 104).

9. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein, in use, said elevator (102) is
movable along said pair of bails (103, 104).

10

10. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 8 or 9, further comprising a piston (117, 118)
and cylinder (119, 120) operatively connected between said pair of bails (103, 104) and
said elevator (102).

15 11. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 10, wherein said piston (117, 118) and
cylinder (119, 120) are pneumatically or hydraulically operable.

12. An apparatus as claimed in any of Claims 8 to 11, wherein said pair of bails
(103, 104) comprise slots (116, 116a) in which pins (115) of said elevator (102) are
20 arranged.

13. An apparatus as claimed in any of Claims 8 to 12, wherein said pair of bails
(103, 104) are attached to a top drive on an axle (106) and are movable thereabout.

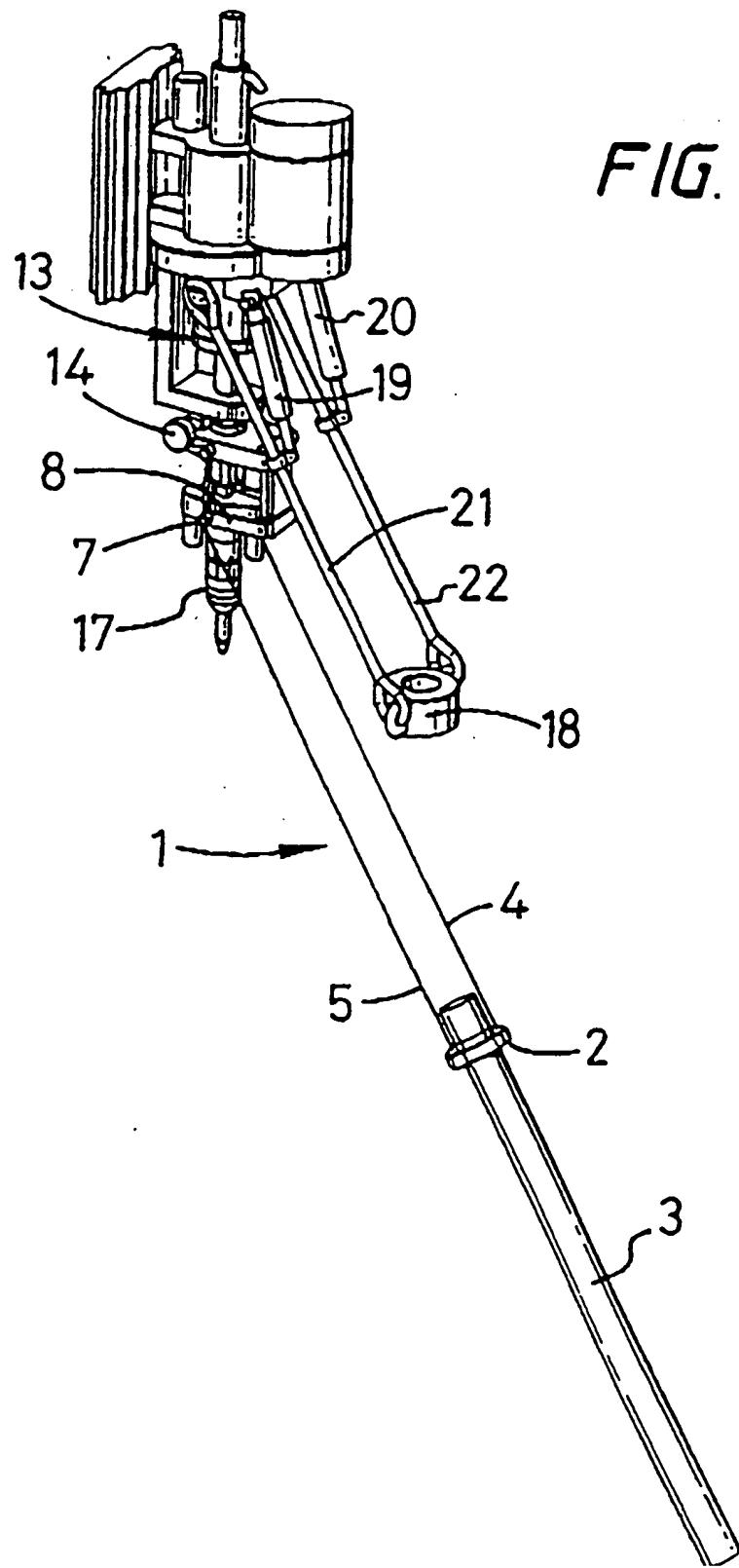
14. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 13, further comprising at least one piston and cylinder (108, 109) for moving said pair of bails (103, 104) and said axle (106).

15. A method for facilitating the connection of tubulars using a top drive, said
5 method comprising the step of using an elevator to move a tubular to a position below
said top drive, wherein the elevator depends from the top drive or from a component
attached thereto.

16. A method according to Claim 15, wherein the elevator is connected to the top
10 drive or to said component by way of a pair of bails, the method comprising the step of
using said elevator to move said tubular in relation to said pair of bails towards or away
from a tool for gripping said tubular.

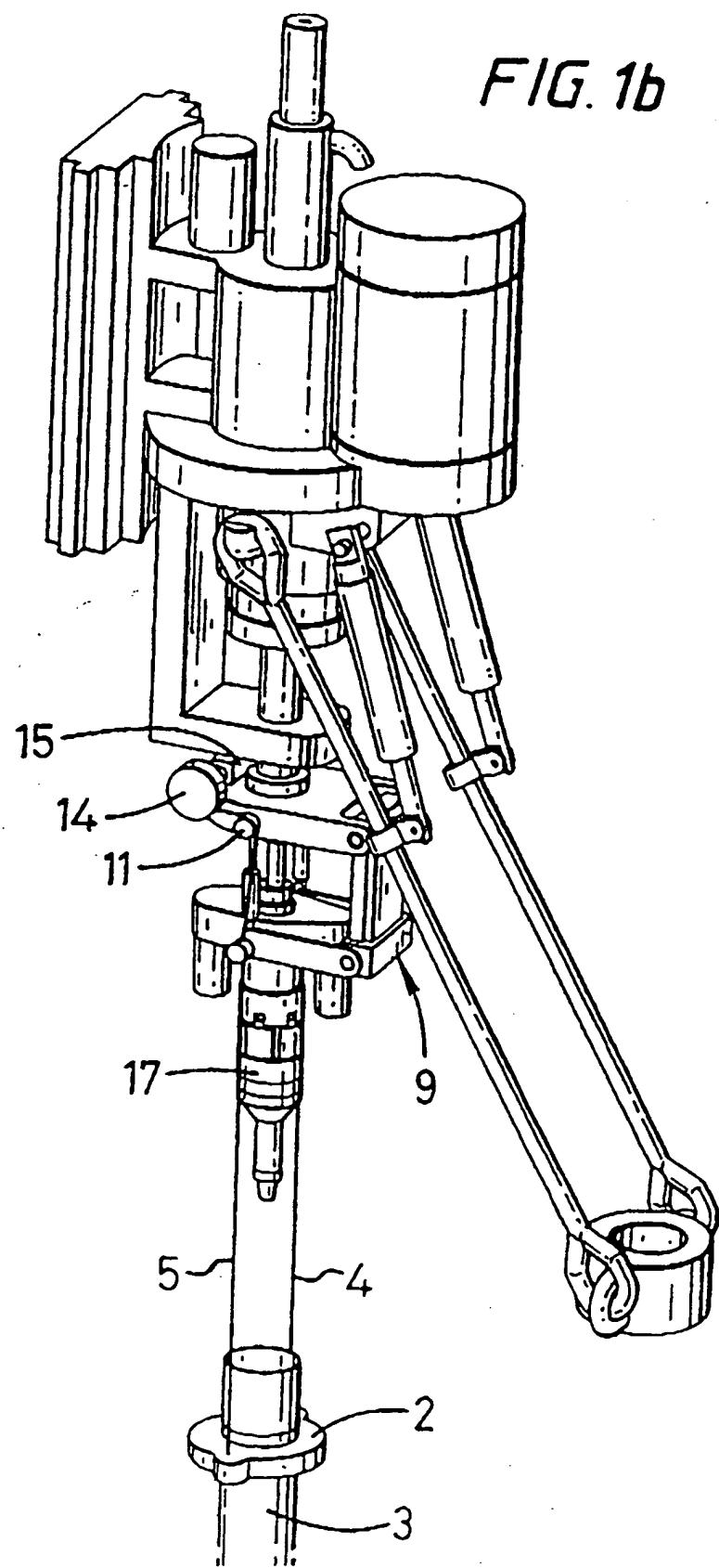
1/9

FIG. 1a



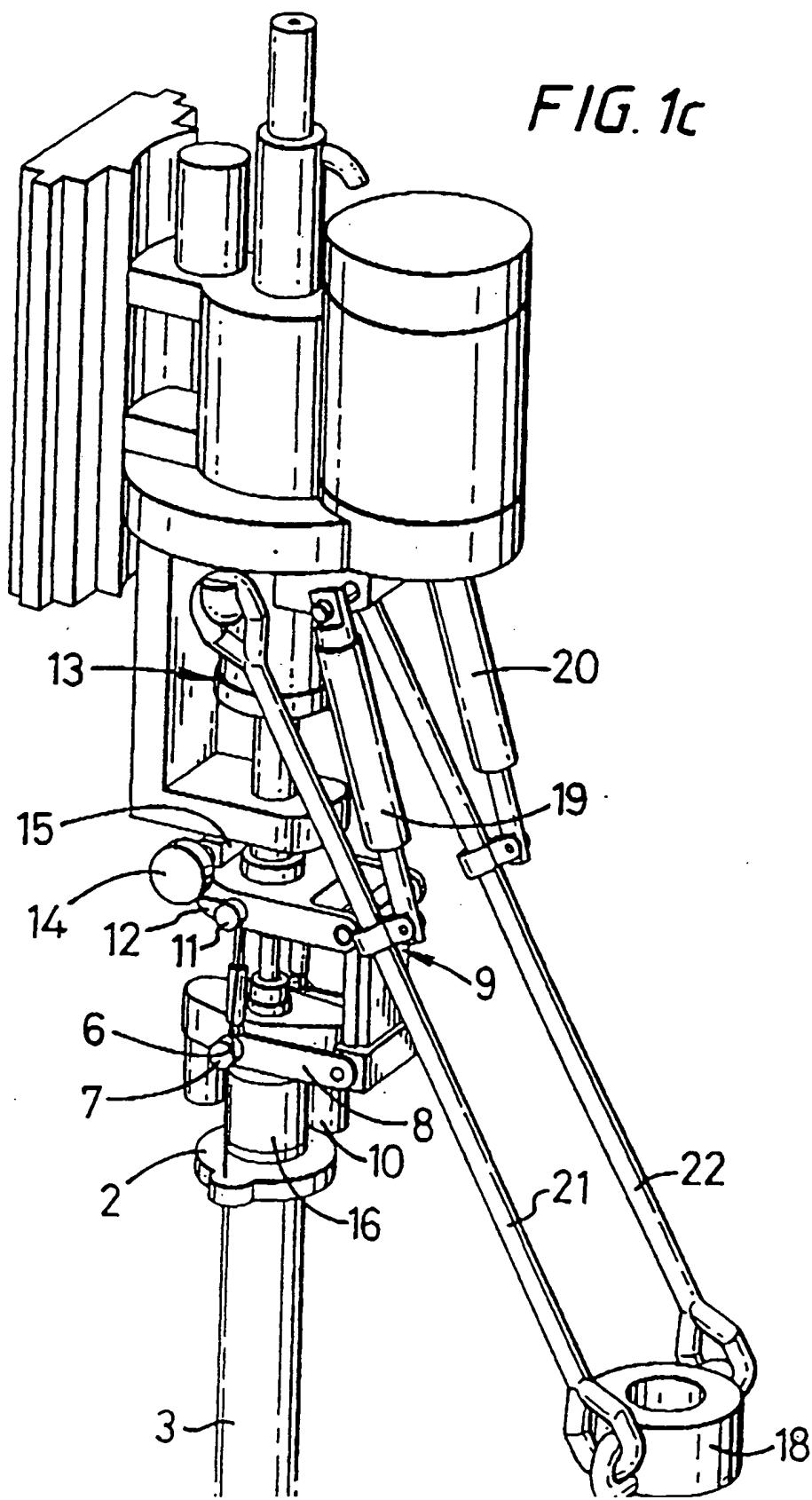
2/9

FIG. 1b



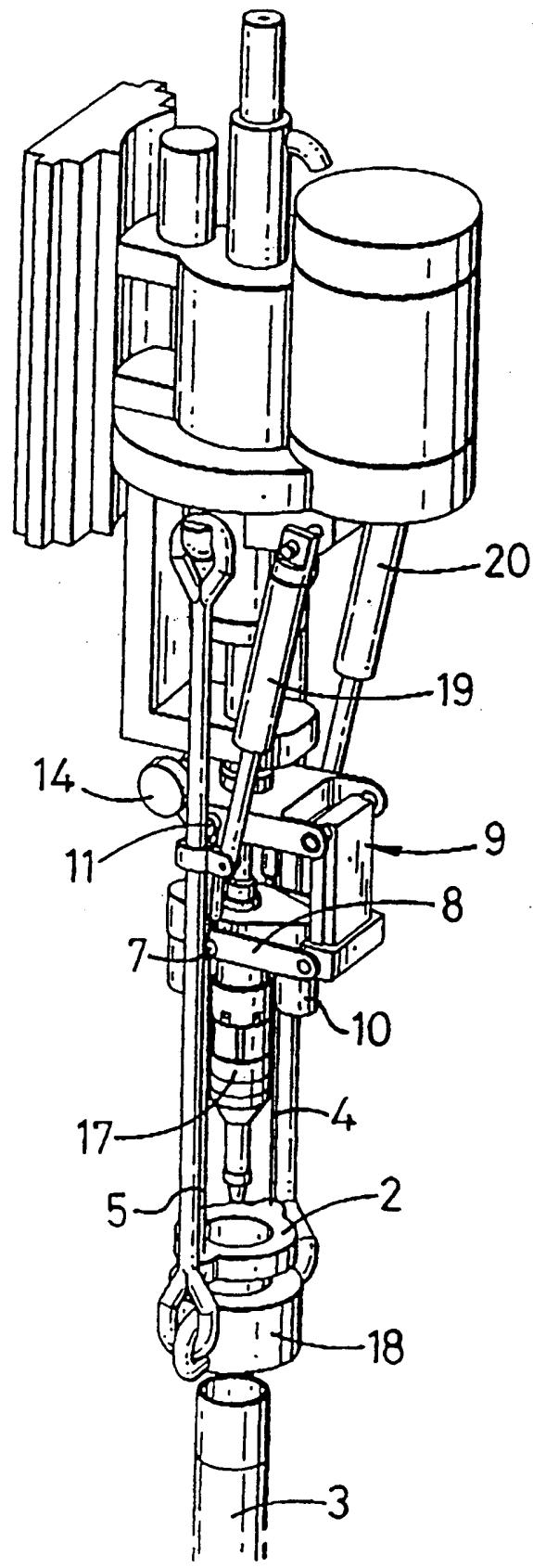
3/9

FIG. 1c



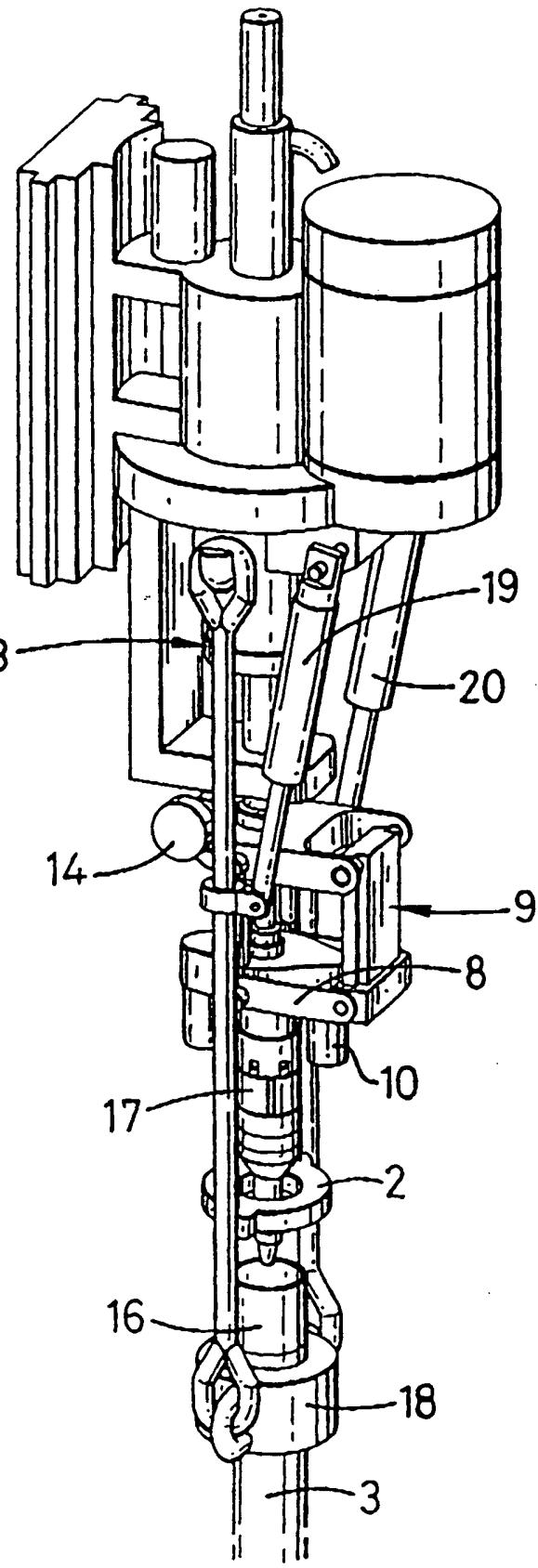
4/9

FIG. 1d



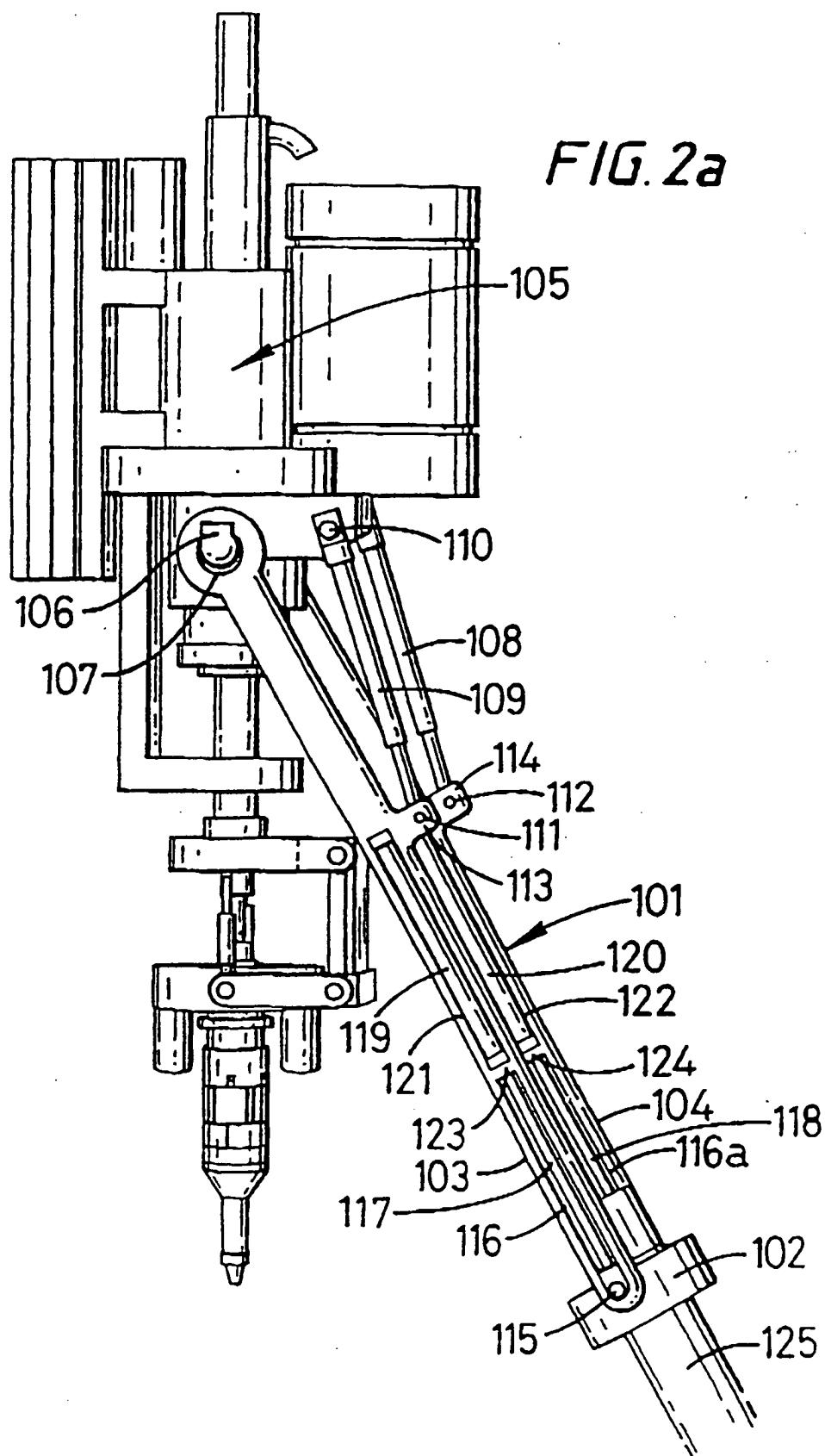
5/9

FIG. 1e



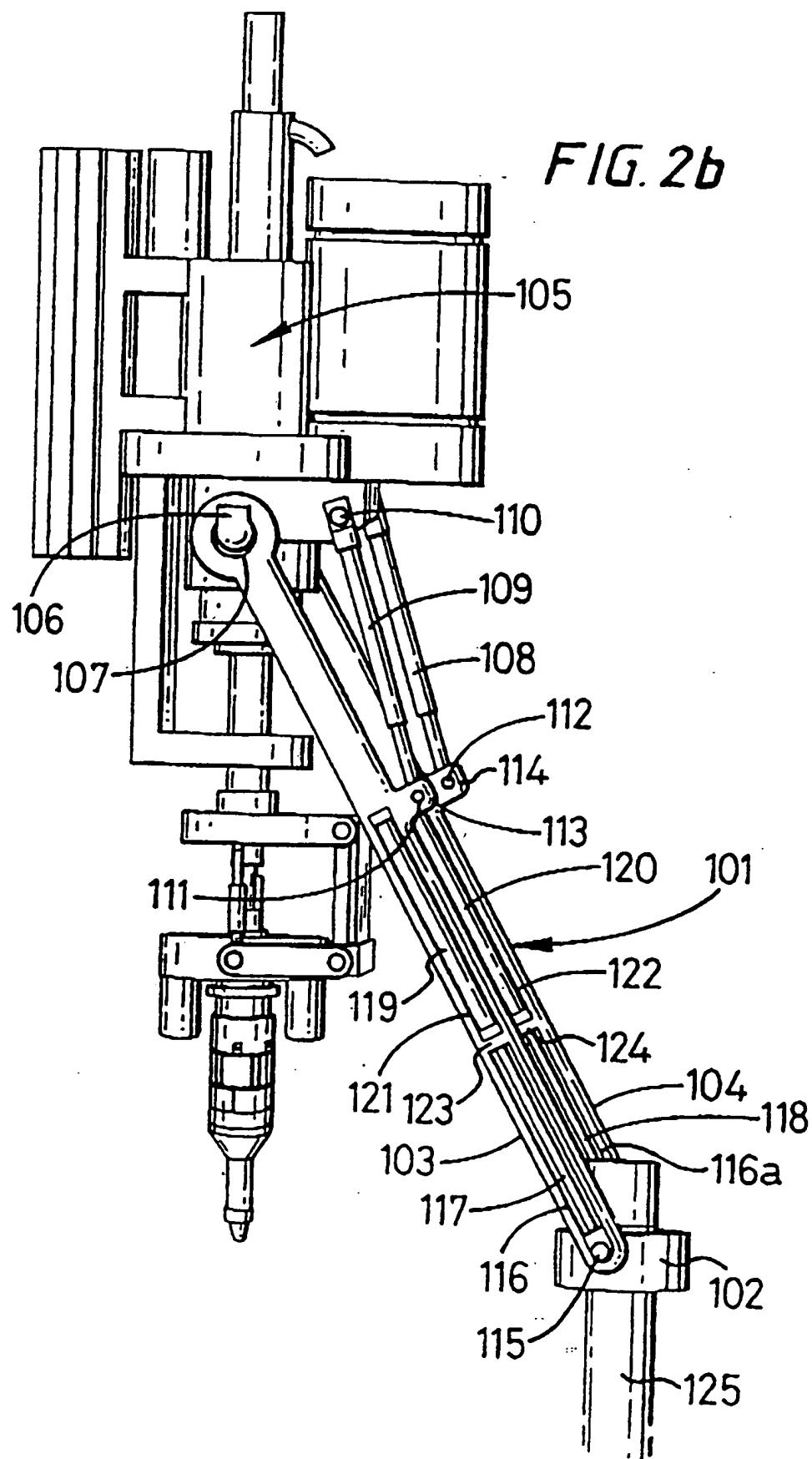
6/9

FIG. 2a



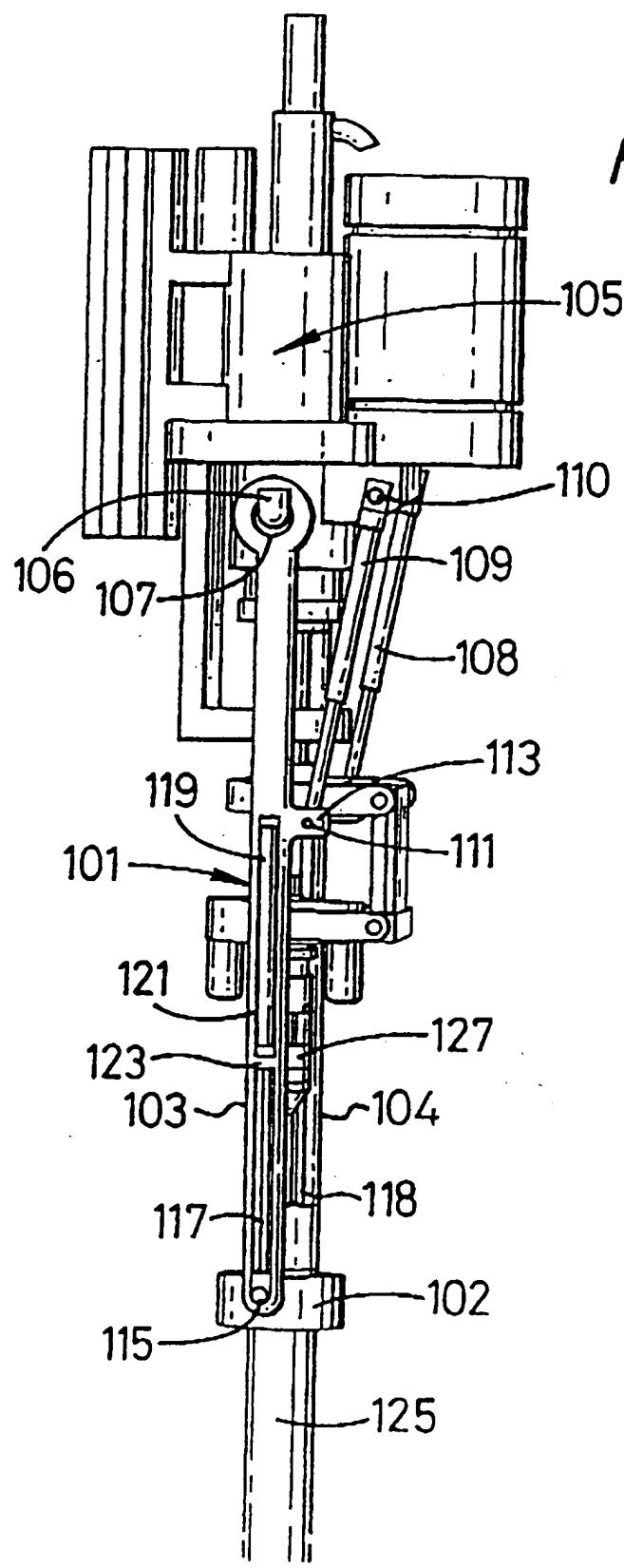
7/9

FIG. 2b



8/9

FIG. 2c



9/9

FIG. 2d

